



Frequently Asked Questions

Draft Revised Recovery Plan for Lost River and Shortnose Suckers October 2011

Q: *What are the Lost River and shortnose suckers and where do they occur?*

A: Both of these species belong to a group of fish that predominantly utilize lake environments in the western United States, collectively known as “lake suckers.” Both species only occur in the upper Klamath Basin, including the Lost River sub-basin. They are found in Upper Klamath Lake, Clear Lake Reservoir, Gerber Reservoir, Tule Lake, Keno Reservoir, and the downstream reservoirs along the Klamath River as far as Iron Gate Reservoir, as well as throughout streams and rivers connected to these bodies of water throughout the upper basin, such as the Lost River, the Sprague River, and Willow Creek near Clear Lake Reservoir.

Q: *Why are the suckers endangered? What are the threats?*

A: Habitat loss, including restricted access to spawning and rearing habitat, severely impaired water quality and increased rates of mortality resulting from entrainment in water management structures are threats that continue to threaten the species’ existence. Extremely poor water quality that occurs periodically throughout summer in Upper Klamath Lake negatively impacts adult survival rates, and, although the specific causes are currently unknown, low juvenile survival is also occurring in these populations as well. The last time a substantial group of juveniles joined the adult populations in Upper Klamath Lake was during the late 1990s. Lastly, entrainment of larvae and small juveniles through water diversion structures continues to drain significant numbers of individuals from populations, especially Upper Klamath Lake, into extremely poor habitats, from which return is unlikely. These factors combined to produce abundances of spawning individuals in 2008 of both species in Upper Klamath Lake roughly 30 - 60 percent less than their 2001 levels.

Q: *What is the status of the suckers?*

A: Although spawning is productive in Upper Klamath Lake for both species, most individuals appear to be dying before they reach sexual maturity. The remaining populations are unable to spawn because of restricted access to spawning habitat, and are therefore unable to maintain their numbers on their own. These populations persist by receiving migrants from other areas. Populations of shortnose sucker appear to be stable, meaning that they have recurring reproduction and recruitment, in Gerber Reservoir and Clear Lake Reservoir, but

these are the only known stable populations for either species; all other populations, including both species in Upper Klamath Lake, appear to continue declining. Populations in Upper Klamath Lake are declining between 10 to 20 percent a year. Some populations are estimated to be less than 40% of their 2001 numbers.

Q. *What is a Recovery Plan?*

A: A Recovery Plan is the road map to recovery. It lays out where we need to go and how best to get there. It is one of the most important tools to ensure sound scientific and logistical decision-making throughout the recovery process. At a minimum a Recovery Plan should describe pertinent ecological information, including threats, outline the recovery strategy, identify necessary recovery actions, and specify criteria to measure the species' progress towards recovery.

Q: *Is the Recovery Plan a regulatory action? Will this Recovery Plan impact water management or private lands?*

A: A Recovery Plan is a guidance document, not a regulatory document. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) or any other entity is not required by the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to implement a recovery strategy or specific actions identified in a Recovery Plan. However, the ESA clearly envisions Recovery Plans as the central organizing tool for guiding species' recovery. The plan does not regulate use of either private or federal lands.

We continually seek for ways to accelerate recovery of threatened and endangered species, while making it easier for people to coexist with these species.

Q: *Why revise the Recovery Plan?*

A: In 1993, the Service adopted a Recovery Plan for the Lost River sucker and shortnose sucker. The Service agreed to complete a revision of the Recovery Plan as part of a legal settlement with Oregon Wild. Additionally, a significant amount of new information has become available since 1993, and many recovery actions have been completed, prompting a need to reassess and update the foundation and direction of the recovery program.

Q: *What is new with this revision?*

A: There are several important components of this recovery program that are new or updated, including a call for the establishment of a formalized Recovery Implementation Program for better focus and coordination among stakeholders. This plan also identifies specific downlisting and delisting criteria. Specific criteria were not provided in the original Recovery Plan (1993) because the authors felt that more information was needed. Additionally, most of the baseline research (such as physiological tolerances, habitat requirements, nutrient budget, etc.) has been conducted since the original Recovery Plan was published. Therefore,

the revision does not include as many recovery actions for this type of research. Instead, it focuses on research of more specific questions, continued restoration, and better coordination. The revision also places less emphasis on research of populations within the downstream reservoirs (below Keno Dam) of the Klamath River.

Q: *What are the strategic elements of the plan?*

A: The strategy to recover these species is to ameliorate negative impacts on viable populations throughout the species' range in order to restore natural population dynamics in the upper Klamath Basin systems, primarily populations of Upper Klamath Lake and Clear Lake Reservoir. This will include efforts to prevent extinction through establishment of viable auxiliary populations, determine the specific threats to and needs of distinct portions or populations of the species, reduce threats to the extent possible through restoration or manipulation, and promote the growth of populations. We believe that with successful implementation of actions associated with the specific objectives enumerated below, Lost River sucker and shortnose sucker populations will obtain healthy, self-sustaining demographic characteristics and age structure; however, should these measures fail or be ineffective, as indicated by continued population declines, a program to enhance redundancy and resiliency through controlled propagation may be needed to prevent extinction in the near-term.

Q: *What is the goal of the Recovery Plan for the Lost River and Shortnose suckers?*

A: The ultimate goal of the recovery program is to arrest the decline and enhance Lost River sucker and shortnose sucker populations so that ESA protection is no longer necessary. To obtain this goal it is necessary to produce naturally self-sustaining populations, which possess healthy long-term demographic traits and trends.

Q: *What will it cost?*

A: We estimate that it will cost roughly \$135 million to recover both of these species over the course of 25 years. Actual budgets will be determined through future planning efforts and as each recovery action is undertaken and new information becomes available. Specific cost estimates are difficult to produce for several actions, such as research, due to uncertainties in the scope and magnitude of the specific task. Recovery Implementation Teams will guide recovery actions based on priorities.

Q: *How long will it take to recover these fish?*

A: We estimate that Lost River sucker and shortnose sucker recovery can occur in five to seven generations. In ecological terms, a generation is the average time it takes for females to become reproductive; this is approximately seven years for Lost River sucker and five years for shortnose sucker. Therefore, we may expect

recovery of these species to occur in 30-to-50 years, depending on our ability to reverse current trends and eliminate threats. This time frame includes the estimated time required to reverse current trends, and the time required to establish and document increased abundances and stable population dynamics.

Q: *How will you know when these suckers have recovered?*

A: We will know that the species have recovered when (1) all of the threats to the species have been eliminated or sufficiently minimized, and (2) populations throughout the range exhibit signs of “healthy” growth and functioning. We will look for signs of an increasing population for at least two average adult life spans (about 25 years) to ensure that the population is able to maintain itself through difficult periods, such as droughts, which occur periodically. We will also look for a diverse mixture of ages in the spawning population, which indicates that successful spawning and maturation is regularly occurring.

Q: *Who will be implementing recovery actions identified in the plan?*

A: The revised Recovery Plan emphasizes partnerships to direct and maintain focus on implementing recovery actions and a system to track implementation and effectiveness of those actions. Recovery Implementation Teams will be comprised of representatives from interested stakeholders, both private and public. The success of this revised Recovery Plan will rely heavily upon the involvement of our partners and commitment to implementing the strategic elements listed above.

Q: *Where can I get a copy of the revised Recovery Plan?*

A: If you wish to review the draft revised Recovery Plan, you may obtain a copy from our website at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/species/recovery-plans.html>. Copies are also available by request by contacting the Field Supervisor by U.S. mail, phone, or email at

Field Supervisor
Klamath Falls Fish and Wildlife Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1936 California Ave.
Klamath Falls, Oregon, 97601

541-885-8481

Email at FW8KFFWOESComments@fws.gov.

If you wish to comment on the plan, you may submit your comments in writing at the address above.

Q: *How was the Recovery Plan prepared?*

A: To assist with preparation of the revised Recovery Plan a Recovery Team was appointed by the Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Region 8). The Recovery Team is composed of eight scientists with experience working on various aspects of sucker biology and aquatic systems. You can read about each team member at http://www.fws.gov/klamathfallsfwo/suckers/sucker_team/s_team.html.

The role of the Recovery Team is to advise the Service on scientific issues concerning the conservation and recovery of the endangered Lost River and shortnose suckers. The Team's responsibilities include assisting the Service in reviewing, updating, and revising the Plan as well as prioritizing Plan activities. The Recovery Team worked with the Service to develop objective and measurable demographic criteria, site-specific management actions, and estimates of the time and cost required to implement the recovery measures. All Recovery Team input and recommendations to the Service do not necessarily represent the views of the Service and are independent of the Service. Ultimately, the Service has statutory responsibility for finalizing and approving Recovery Plans.

Because these species occur in water bodies adjacent to private, state and federally owned lands, and involve controversial issues including water allocation and land use, the Service established an inclusive process for this Recovery Plan revision. A Stakeholder Committee met several times to assure pertinent communication between stakeholders and the Recovery Team. All Recovery Plans undergo scientific peer review as well as public review. The Service must consider all information obtained from the public prior to finalizing the plan.

Q: *Is the Recovery Team subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)?*

A: Members of the Lost River and Shortnose Sucker Recovery Team were officially appointed by the Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Region 8). Under subsection 4(f) (2) of the Endangered Species Act, recovery teams appointed pursuant to this subsection are not subject to the requirements of FACA.

Q: *Will the draft Recovery Plan be peer reviewed?*

A: The draft Recovery Plan will be peer reviewed by at least three individuals from the scientific community to ensure that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is using the best biological and commercial data available to recover these species. These reviews will occur at the same time of the public review and comment period. Peer reviewers will be asked to review the document specifically for issues and assumptions relating to the biological and ecological information of the plan, and

the recovery program outlined in the plan. They will be specifically asked if they (1) have any comments or concerns about the recovery criteria, (2) do the actions reflect a biologically sound conservation approach, (3) are the proposed actions sufficient, and (4) are there other actions that should be included in the plan.

Q: *When will a final Recovery Plan be ready?*

A: The draft Recovery Plan will be open for a 60-day public comment period and comments will be accepted until December 19, 2011. We will then compile and address comments; how quickly this occurs will depend on the number of comments received. The timing will also depend on the magnitude of revisions that are required in the document based on the comments received.